

Birch Funeral Home
3034 M Street, N.W.
Washington (Georgetown)
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-142

HABS
DC
GEO
85

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20006

BIRCH FUNERAL HOME

HABS
DC
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Location: 3034 M Street N.W., (Georgetown), Washington, D.C., south side of street, corner of Thomas Jefferson Street. Stable/garage is behind the main building at what would be about 1083 Thomas Jefferson Street.

Present Owner: Jacqueline Antone (1966)

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Statement of Significance: The house facade has fine cast iron details. The stable/garage is the only late 19th century structure of its kind remaining in the Georgetown waterfront area.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical history:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The following information is the chain of title to the land on which the buildings are located. The site is Square 1197, lot 808 (old lot 60, subdivisions 1 and 3). The references are to the Recorder of Deeds, District of Columbia.

1797 Right of Way dated January 8, 1797, recorded January 8, 1797 in
Liber B folio 619
Robert Peter
To

Corporation of Georgetown

"Beginning at the south side of Bridge [M] Street at the end of 239'6" in easterly direction from northwest corner of Bridge Street and Fishing Lane, and running southerly parallel with Fishing Lane until it intersects the north side of causeway [K Street]--easterly with north side of causeway for the length of 60'--northerly parallel with first line to Bridge Street, thence to beginning. Peter conveys as much of the above ground as is included in [his] lot 60 for a public highway [Thomas Jefferson Street]."

- 1798 Deed August 3, 1798 recorded August 4, 1798 in
Liber D folio 22
John Howes
To
John Thompson
Conveys lot 61 in Georgetown, commonly called the
"Spring lot".
- 1799 Deed January 30, 1799 recorded May 25, 1799 in
Liber D folio 269
John Thompson
To
James Thompson
Lot 61
- 1799 Deed May 14, 1799 recorded May 25, 1799 in
Liber D folio 272
James Thompson
To
Robert Peter
Lot 61
- 1799 Partition May 20, 1799 recorded May 25, 1799 in
Liber D folio 267
Robert Peter
James Thompson
John M. Gantt
A division of lot 61 and part of lot 60: "it is
mutually agreed that said lot 61 and part of lot
60 shall be divided into 12 lots, as numbered on
the within map that the lots 12, 11, 7, 6, 1 and
3 shall be conveyed to Robert Peter...." The
present lot 808 is the western 26 1/2' of lots 1
and 3. Lots 1 and 3 ran 93' on Jefferson ; lot
808 runs 90.5', followed by an alley 4.5' wide.
- 1801 Deed October 1, 1801 recorded November 28, 1801 in
Liber G folio 398
Robert Peter Sr.
To
James Thompson
Conveys lots 1 and 3 of the subdivision of 60 and
61.

- 1856 Will of James Thompson, Will book 7 folio 397.
September 25, 1856.

All residue of the estate (which includes lots 1 and 3) to William Henry Esperance Hersant and Mary Theresa Henrietta Hersant Melin with power in the executors Walter H. S. Taylor and H. G. B. Smith to sell and convey with their consent.

- 1857 Power of Attorney December 16, 1856 recorded July 24, 1857 in

Liber JAS 138 folio 202

Guillaume H. E. Hersant

Marie T. H. Hersant, wife of Jean S. Melin

(legatees of James Thompson, their maternal grandfather)

To

Walter H. S. Taylor

J. H. B. Smith

Power to sell etc. all interest of grantors in the estate of Thompson.

- 1861 Deed September 24, 1857 recorded May 21, 1861 in
Liber NCT 5 folio 253

Walter H. S. Taylor

Jonathan H. B. Smith

To

Joseph F. Birch

Conveys lots 1 and 3, i.e. 25'1" on Bridge Street

(M Street) and 90 feet to the alley on Thomas

Jefferson Street with use of the alley.

Consideration \$1600.

- 1857 Deed in Trust October 1, 1857 recorded November 5, 1857 in

Liber JAS 144 folio 132

Joseph F. Birch

To

William Redin

To secure \$1066.68. (Release of March 15, 1858 in

Liber NCT 5 folio 239 recorded May 21, 1863.)

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- 1858 Deed in Trust October 19, 1857 recorded January 16, 1858 in
Liber JAS 148 folio 17
Joseph F. Birch et ux Ann E,
To
Walter S. Cox
Hugh Caperton
Treasurers, Union Bldg. Assn., Georgetown
To secure \$1000. (Release October 28, 1870 recorded
November 3, 1870 in Liber 625 folio 457)
- 1870 Deed in Trust March 2, 1870 recorded the same date in
Liber 625 folio 490
Joseph F. Birch
To
William D. Cassin
Frederick W. Jones
Treasurer, South Building Association of Georgetown
Release: November 4, 1875 in Liber 802, folio 423,
recorded November 23, 1875.
- 1891 Will of Joseph F. Birch dated August 15, 1891 recorded
Will Book 29, folio 430 August 28, 1891 (Deed August 19,
1891).
One half of the lot to Isaac Birch, the other half
to Charles E. and Isaac Birch, trustees, for use of
George A. Birch for life and on his death to convey
same to any child. George A. Birch died leaving
Albert G. Birch his only child.
- 1904 Deed July 15, 1904 recorded July 15, 1904 in
Liber 2828 folio 372
Albert G. Birch
To
Isaac Birch
(Gives his share)
Will of Isaac Birch, filed April 18, 1934, Adminis-
tration #46,552.
Property is good in Bessie Birch Haycock, devisee
under will.
- 1966 Deed February 25, 1966 recorded March 2, 1966 in
Liber 12571 folio 579
Bessie Birch Haycock et vir Archer L. Haycock
To
Jacqueline Antone
\$140,000 (\$154 stamps).

2. Date of erection: Between 1866 and 1871. Assessment records for 1865-70 (National Archives Microcopy 605, Group 351, roll 12) show that in 1865 the property had as improvements, "frame building and workshop - \$1000". A note appended in 1866 indicates that a "3 story brick dwelling" was added. (Assessment figures illegible). The assessment for 1871 (roll 13) p. 8 indicates that lot 60, property value \$1800, (same as in 1865) but improvements are now valued at \$5000.
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: None known.
5. Alterations and additions: The main building on M Street has had the lower floor completely altered. Interior of both house and stable/garage have been remodeled.
6. Important old views: None known.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

1. The following information about the Birch funeral establishment is from D.C. city directories:

1860 Joseph F. Birch, undertaker, 65 Bridge Street, h.
88 Bridge Street - cabinet maker and undertaker
1862 Isaac Birch, h. 12 2nd Street
1864 Joseph F. Birch, undertaker, Bridge, corner Jefferson
1874 Joseph F. Birch, Undertaker, Bidge cor. Jefferson
h. 88 Bridge Street
1891 Joseph F. Birch Undertaker, 3034 M Street, N. W.
h. 3043 M Street, N. W.
1892 Joseph F. Birch Sons (George A. and Isaac) under-
takers.
1903 Isaac Birch, undertaker
1904 Joseph F. Birch's Sons, undertakers (Isaac Birch)
1933 Joseph F. Birch's Sons, undertakers (Isaac Birch,
Archer L. Haycock) (Archer Haycock married Bessie
Birch, presumably a sister of Isaac)
1934 same
1948 Joseph F. Birch's Sons, (B. Birch Haycock) under-
takers
1965 Joseph F. Birch's Sons, (B. Birch Haycock) funeral
directors
1967 vacant

2. In the subdivision of lots 60 and 61 in 1799, James Thompson owned Lot 61. He had received it the same year from John Thompson, perhaps his brother. After the division he got lots 1 and 3, forming the corner land, from Robert Peter in 1801. James Thompson was a member of the Georgetown Columbia Lodge No. 19, and was Worshipful Master in 1795. In 1796 and 1797 he was Secretary of the same lodge. He died in 1855.
3. In 1891 Isaac Birch inherited half interest in the funeral home established by his father, and in 1904 received title to the entire property. He was apparently active in the local Masonic Lodge No. 5 just down the street from his establishment. In 1880 he is listed as Junior Warden of that lodge, in 1883 its Worshipful Master, and from 1903 until 1933 was treasurer.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Recorder of Deeds, District of Columbia.
Boyd's City Directories.
Assessment Records, 1800-07 (National Archives).
2. Secondary and published sources: A Century and a Half of Freemasonry in Georgetown 1789-1939, (Georgetown 1939).
3. Likely sources not yet investigated: Contemporary newspaper accounts and advertisements; District of Columbia Building Permits; further assessment records.

Prepared by: Daniel D. Reiff
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
September, 1967

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Birch Funeral Home has fine late nineteenth century cast iron hood molds, as well as a fine metal cornice which give character to a plain brick building.
2. Condition of fabric: The north facade has been well maintained (although the first floor has been changed) but the other sides are in only fair condition. The interior has been completely remodeled.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: The house is rectangular 45'3" by 26'6" and is attached by a link 4' 6" wide to the stable or carriage house which measures 41'4" by 26'3". The house has a three bay facade, and is three stories tall; the carriage house is two stories.
2. Foundations: Brick and random rubble foundation walls.
3. Wall construction: Common bond red brick with headers every six rows. Painted white on the east and north. Hood molds and trim are white on the west wall.
4. Framing: The wooden beam structural system rests on load bearing brick walls.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: A recently constructed concrete retaining wall forms a narrow ereaway on the east side of the stable basement. On the west side of the house are 3 or more brick areaways with gray granite copings flush with the sidewalk. (They are heavily overgrown.)
6. Chimneys: Two small square brick chimneys appear inside the west wall of the house, capped by two rows of brick. A small square concrete covered chimney is against the east wall of the stable, near the south corner.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The house has a modern 6 panel door with side lights and fan light on the north facade. At the southern end of the west side is a 6 panel 2 leaf wooden door (modern) which appears to be in an opening formed by cutting down an existing window to street level. In the stable at the northern end of the west side is a 4 panel door (with diagonal boarding behind chamfered rails and mullions) with a one panel light above it, capped with a brick hood mold. On the second floor, directly above this doorway, is an identical door, but with a three light transom. At the south end of the second floor is a somewhat wider two panel two leaf door with diagonal boarding with a one panel light above it, a brick hood mold, and a wooden sill. Above this doorway is a wooden hoist beam with an iron loop at the end. There are three large entrance doors on the first floor, under a flat fascia capped by a ~~cyma~~ recta molding. The two northern doors are central hinged, with two X panels each leaf with vertical boarding 1 3/4" wide

with one bead. Both have six light transoms with modern glass. The third (southern) doorway is a modern roll up type garage door of 24 panels, 6 of which are glass, under a 7 pane transom. The link between house and stable has a 6 panel modern door on the first floor.

- b. Windows and shutters: On the north facade of the house are 2/2 double hung sash windows on the second and third floors, with wooden panels below those on the second floor reaching to floor level sills. These windows are capped with ornate cast iron hood molds and on the third floor have cast iron sills on two consoles. The first floor has three large modern 15 light windows. On the west side, the second and third floors have 2/2 sash windows with flat caps of cast iron in a miniature acanthus-decorated cornice. The sills are also cast iron but undecorated. There are no windows on the first floor as the northern two have been bricked up (caps and sills remain) and the southern one transformed into a doorway. In the gable end is a two panel louvered attic lunette. The stable has one small window at the north end of the west side next to the doorway; this window is now sealed with a plain 4 panel solid shutter. On the second floor are three windows, all 2/2 sash with wooden frames painted white, a segmental arch in brick over each, and a wooden sill. On the east side, first floor, is a triple window (two 2 light casement windows, each under a segmental arch, flank a 3 light central window under a flat arch); a small 3/3 square window in the center; and at the north end a 6/6 sash window under a segmental arch. On the second floor, is a square louvered opening under a segmental arch with a wood sill and three 6/6 sash windows under segmental arches with wooden sills. At ground level in the south wall near the east corner is a segmental arch cellar window, now bricked up. The link has a 2/2 sash window on the west side and on the east a 6/6 sash window. Shutter pintles are still found on the west side of the house, but no shutters.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The built up roof of the carriage house or stable is of single slope from west to east.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A pressed metal Corinthian cornice crowns the north facade of the house with two terminal consoles decorated with palmettes. The stable cornice (west side) is composed of a pressed metal cyma recta molding supported on a row of chamfered brackets; at the ends are large

chamfered consoles. Five perforated breather plates occur in the frieze. On the east wall of the stable a simple cornice is composed of three courses of corbeled stretcher rows with a metal cap.

- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: In the middle of the roof are two metal ventilation and skylight towers with gable roofs; one contains six and the other four translucent lights. A kitchen and toilet with a porch enclosed in clapboarding rest on the north end of the roof. They are part of the link to which the stable is attached.
- C. Description of Interior: After years of alterations, virtually nothing remains of the original interior. Along the north wall of the house are a straight run of stairs; 9 1/4" treads and 8 1/2" risers. Flooring is wood and concrete. Old steel bolt locks appear on several doors. The lighting is incandescent. Heating is through steam radiators. One old cast iron stove (1877) is located on the second floor.
- D. Site:
 1. General setting and orientation: The house and stable are located on the east side of Thomas Jefferson St. at the corner of M Street, a block north of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. To its south is a new apartment building (1967), and to the east is a used car lot. Thomas Jefferson St. contains many fine old residential structures.
 2. Enclosures: None.
 3. Outbuildings: None. The stable is now attached to the house by a wooden addition about 4 1/2' wide.
 4. Walks: The two structures about a red brick herringbone public walk, lined with trees on the west, and an asphalted alley on the south.

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National Park Service
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